CNN, February 15, 2005

NEW YORK (CNN) -- A U.S. television and advertising campaign is spreading the word in Pakistan about a \$25 million reward for information leading to the capture of Osama bin Laden.

CNN anchor Soledad O'Brien talked Tuesday with U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Illinois, who has visited Pakistan to assess the program.

O'BRIEN: Why do you think that somebody in Pakistan who hears this ad will be motivated to turn in Osama bin Laden when heretofore there's been no luck?

KIRK: Well, right now the area where we think he's hiding is rural and the communities are largely illiterate. So news about the reward program and how to come in and how safely your family will be protected hasn't really penetrated these communities.

I'm the first congressman to go into Waziristan, where we think bin Laden is hiding. And there I found people were avid radio [listeners], and some also had satellite TV stations. So this is going to be the first time many of these communities hear about the awards program. And it's been so successful in catching other murderers of Americans.

O'BRIEN: It has a track record. What kind of play are your commercials going to get?

KIRK: It's going to be on six Pakistani radio networks and three satellite TV stations and every major daily in Pakistan. So we're getting wide coverage, with the TV commercials just starting this morning.

O'BRIEN: When you say it's had success, give me a sense of what kind of success it's had?

KIRK: We're getting about 12 leads a day. And this is a program where we could get a thousand bad leads, but if we get one good one, the program will be a success.

O'BRIEN: But 12 leads about Osama bin Laden?

KIRK: About Osama bin Laden. This is the program that got us Ramzi Yousef, [who was the architect] of the '93 World Trade Center bombing; Mir Aimal Kansi [a Pakistani convicted of killing two CIA employees outside agency headquarters]; also, Saddam Hussein's two sons. Very successful.

We've paid over \$50 million in awards, but we haven't gotten bin Laden yet, and that was why I went to Waziristan because I saw that news of this program hadn't got out yet in this rural community, but the radio and TV program will definitely change the facts on the ground.

O'BRIEN: So you've been in Pakistan. What was the reaction or -- I know it's sort of very early in on the program, but what do you expect the reaction will be? There are many people who would imagine a backlash actually.

KIRK: Right. Some radio networks were initially concerned about running the ads, but now the ads are getting very good play and generating a lot of leads. And what we're finding is the space that bin Laden can hide in is beginning to contract. Three years ago, he could have been anywhere among a 100 million people.

Now we think he's in a fairly confined place among just a million people. And as we get the rewards program notices out and make the ads more effective and more meaningful, we generate more leads.

O'BRIEN: You say a lot of leads but really 12 a day. Have any of them come up with anything?

KIRK: Not yet. Not yet. But this is where 10,000 bad leads and one good one leads to a good result. And for us, we want to make this not just a program capable of nailing bin Laden, but the other 25 top al Qaeda lieutenants, so that we complete the job that we started on September 12, 2001.